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Why No More Time for the Master's Work

By MRS. M. L. WILDER.

"*Ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?*"—MAL. III: 8.

"*Thy kingdom come.*"—MATT. VI: 10.

I wish I had not attended the Bible reading yesterday. It is not what Mrs. Manse says so much as it is the train of thoughts her remarks suggest that makes one feel uncomfortable. She never finds fault or dictates duty, but has a way of putting reasonable questions that worries you into investigating your life as a Christian, that you may be sure you are not guilty of the omission or commission the question implies.

Yesterday she took the passage from Malachi and that clause from Matthew, together with the question, "Why no more time for the Master's work?" as the center about which our thoughts were to cluster. I declare, I came home feeling

that I was actually robbing my Heavenly Father and retarding in some serious way the coming of His kingdom, but how I cannot see. Mrs. Manse dismissed the money question from the plan of the reading. All acknowledge the women of our church to be liberal toward every good cause. She did not make a point on any special duty, but left it for each of us to find out for ourselves wherein we are robbing God of anything our Christian vows implied we would render unto Him.

All day long I have been examining my life, and now, in this quiet twilight, I am doing it again, but do not see wherein I am withholding from God anything I have *time* or talent to give. I am sure no one desires the coming of God's kingdom on earth more than I do. To my Saviour I owe the position and privileges I enjoy as a woman. It would be base ingratitude not to do all I can toward the advancement of His reign on earth, both for His own glory's sake and that other women may be blessed as I am. But what more can I do so long as my days—I might say my nights also—are crowded with work?

I am not injuring God's cause by dancing, theatre-going, card-playing or gossiping. I give a tenth of the income John gives me for my private use. I attend the missionary meeting whenever I can, go to Bible reading, prayer-meeting, church twice on Sunday, besides Sunday-school, often attending to these duties when I am too weary to gain benefit or satisfaction from them. I also try to set a good example. Last week I was so busy I had no time to study my Sunday school lesson. I was finishing my table cloth, that I might get it ready for the county fair. They always want my fancy work; it is handsome and well done. I did not finish it till after eight o'clock Saturday evening; then my eyes

ached so badly I did not dare to use them in the gaslight. I would not go into the Sunday school class without my lesson learned for the sake of the example to the unconverted members of the the class.

God does not expect impossibilities of us. Mrs. Manse said that. He knows our mortal bodies will not carry us beyond certain limits even to do work for Him. I am not a lazy woman. I am constantly hearing expressions of surprise at the amount of work I accomplish. Family duties occupy my morning hours, and so long as I am obliged to do most of our sewing, very many afternoons *must* be devoted to that alone.

I must keep up my social duties and read a little; indeed, I have scarcely any time for reading outside of what I do in connection with the Shakespeare Club; it takes so much time and thought. I was nearly two months, such time as I could spare to it, gathering material, making notes, and looking up references for my paper on the "Doubtful Plays." The paper was nearly half an hour long. It was so much more work than I had expected it would be that I was obliged to excuse myself from the charge of the June missionary meeting. I was very sorry it so happened. The President acted as if I did not know what my own duties were. If she only knew how long it takes to get up an accurate paper on any of Shakespeare's plays! He so often serves his own ends with dates and history that one hardly feels safe in quoting him till after having been to acknowledged authority on such points.

Then there is my fancy work. It takes hours and hours. I have such a passion for it. I cannot resist doing something of every new kind I see. It was right pleasant to take those six premiums. One for the lace, one for the "drawn

work," one for those "darned lace" curtains, one for that lovely toilet set, one for my embroidered lawn handkerchief, and one for my table cover. A very fair showing of fancy work for one year, considering I never allow it to interfere with my family duties. I was greatly annoyed at the fair by a woman behind me saying, as she scrutinized those "drawn work" flounces, "that for twenty-five cents a yard she could buy handsomer machine work than that." I rather think not. It took me weeks to do them, and nearly ruined my eyes in the bargain.

Then there is the art society. I must take my turn in leading it, and it does seem as if our turns at writing papers came pretty often. There are so many who think they have no talent in that direction that the responsibility of keeping up the interest falls upon a few. Last year our general subject was the "Old Paintings." What stacks of books I wandered through to find something about the "Madonna" I had to write up! This year it is Household Decorations. I had for my theme "Front Hall Stairs." I had no idea so much time and talent had been spent in the construction of stairs. I shall remember my paper on stairs not only for the time and trouble I put into the writing of it, but because of the remark of that well-meaning but uncultured Mrs. Blunt. Our ladies sent her here to see if I could assist in making clothes, with which they were to dress children for Sunday school. Fearing she would consider me indifferent to such good work and that she might see for herself how absolutely impossible it was for me to help them, I told her what I was doing, and pointed to the pile of books I must look through for the needed information on the construction and styles of stairs, when she coolly replied:

"I hope you will be able to tell those ladies

how to build a pair of stairs long enough, and strong enough, and of proper style to carry you all to heaven."

I must paint a little to keep my hand and eye in practice. I am sorry I have had to give my music up, for they often need some one at the organ in prayer meeting, or in the choir on Sunday; but one pair of mortal hands can't do everything, and I am sure I don't see how I am to take an afternoon each month to visit the poor, as our pastor asked us to do. It seems as if to the busiest came the extra calls. Mrs. Manse has actually urged me to take charge of her mission band. She knows I have a faculty with little children. The band is really too large to be all in one division, but it would take nearly an afternoon once a month, besides the preparation necessary to make the meetings interesting; so how am *I* to do it? I am sure I wish I could do many things for my Saviour; my heart aches to see His cause lag. If Mrs. Manse or any one else could look into my life as I am now doing, I know they would see *no time* for more of even my Master's work. Then the question is, all things considered, Am *I* robbing God? In my present circumstances, have *I* time to do anything more toward hastening the coming of His kingdom, for which I daily, earnestly pray?

If Mrs. Manse could have looked down the course of that life and heard those questions, she, remembering her own shortcomings, would not have presumed to dictate a change in any one's life work, but would have affectionately asked for an honest answer to the questions:

"Are your circumstances what they should be as a Christian woman? When inside the pearly

gates, will your article on Shakespeare's 'Doubtful Plays,' or your paper on the 'Styles and Construction of Stairs,' or even that choice collection of premium-taking fancy work be accepted as stars to make brilliant your crown of rejoicing?"

"But cannot Christian women do these things?" I hear a hundred voices ask. "Shall not Christian women be women of culture?" To both questions—Yes. To the last question, an emphatic YES. Let Christian women be our most cultured women. God demands it, His cause demands it. Culture like unto Himself: our ambition cannot go beyond that.

To the first question—yes, if you have time and strength for such work, as well as for the work your Heavenly Father lays in the path of every disciple; but if you are limited in time and in strength, which should a Christian woman choose? Before we quibble about what we may or may not do, let us remember a few things. We are women made in GOD'S IMAGE, placed in a world running wild with wickedness, to be coworkers with our God in overcoming that wickedness. Do we realize the *dignity* of being an assistant to our God? Do we realize what it is to be made in God's image? When we do realize all this we will be gladly willing to "come up to God's help against the mighty," and to devote our time and talents to beautifying living characters, that they may be fit for the world eternal rather than to spend them in ransacking musty volumes for knowledge about those dead these hundreds of years, if ever existing at all outside the famous author's brain. Then will the Christian woman who can interest a party of ladies on the subject of stair-building employ her powerful pen in urgent pleas for the building of hospitals, churches, schools, and homes of the proper style, that by means of them the poor and

degraded may ascend to their God. Or, if our talents are of the humbler sort, we will love to give part of the time now devoted to eye-ruining fancy work, to some poor and machineless mother, who, besides all the other work of her family, must force her weary fingers to do their sewing. In all our towns are women who would not accept our charity, but who would thank us and love us for that sisterly interest which would prompt an occasional afternoon's sewing for them on our machines. We would not feel the weight of the burden we should thus be helping a less fortunate sister to bear.

Fancy work is not wrong. Art clubs and Shakespeare clubs are not wrong, only as we give to them more time than we give to our Lord, at whose feet we voluntarily laid the services of our lives. Let us be honest with God; He will be reasonable with us. Do not let us rob Him of such help as shall tend to hasten the coming of His kingdom. We may say what we like about God carrying out His plans, but we must remember He uses human instrumentalities, and every Christian is responsible for advancing or retarding God's kingdom on earth.

Right along the line of work that will render to God what He has a right to expect of us will come the culture that will make us like unto Himself; will come all, and more than any study of Shakespeare can offer us; for if you are ambitious to perfect yourself in the pure English for which his writings are so justly celebrated, a study of the Bible will afford you the opportunity. It is more world-renowned than even Shakespeare for the purity of its English. If you wish to study characters of all kinds in all circumstances, then let the Bible again be your text-book, for therein all phases of human nature are portrayed with a pen more powerful in its

delineations than that of any human drama[illegible], and be you sure that for the history of which it treats you will never need to turn to "acknowledged authority."

We are the daughters of a King whose forces are engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with a powerful adversary. Shall we, while it continues thus, permit our names to be placed on the disabled list, because our time is taken, and we are weary and worn with work that must seem frivolous to every thinking woman when compared with the results that might follow were this same time, or a part of it, given in aiding to prosecute our Father's work? With what grief would we look upon a child who should thus rob us of needed aid?

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